

April 30, 2015

To: History/Social Science Committee

Re: Need for Latino history included in the draft Framework for History/Social Science

I am Cynthia Cortez, a Lecturer in Mexican American Studies, History, and Humanities at St. Philip's College in San Antonio and I am writing as a concerned citizen in regards to the U.S. History/Social Science Curriculum Framework that is being considered for adoption. I have experience in reviewing history, political science, and economic textbooks for the Texas State Board of Education and concluded that the textbooks being reviewed need a more inclusive history of indigenous, Mexican American and other ethnic people and culture across the board in all textbooks and instructional materials.

There is considerable research indicating that well designed ethnic curricula has positive academic and social outcomes for students. As concern grows more toward standards and accountability, multicultural education and studies has slowly decrease and it is evident in the curriculum and textbooks. From 1980 to 2000, the Latino population more than doubled. By 2020, indigenous, Latinos, African-Americans and Asian Americans will represent half of the total population ages 25 to 64. Females have made progress in educational attainment relative to males but sizable disparities still exist among race/ethnic populations. Despite these increases in educational attainment for females, educational attainment among Latino males has actually declined over the past 20 years.

Aside from Mexican Americans being the majority of school aged children, relating relevancy in the lived experiences of Mexican Americans, and ensuring that youth learn of

contributions that have been made in U.S. History, the underlying issue is that the inclusion of Mexican American studies is not exclusively for Latinos; it's for everyone.

Moreover, students are aware of the bias in curriculum, they can describe it in some detail. Ethnic studies should exist from the pre-K level and onward. Studies have shown that students who identify little with their ethnic origin tend to achieve poorly. There are three major and positive effects on students with an ethnic study curriculum: academic engagement, academic achievement, and personal empowerment. Students become very engaged because they are able to identify. Let's ensure that students can see that their heritage has worth.

I appreciate the commitment the committee of the California Department of Education have made to serve and want to contribute to the education of children for years to come, for a better future. However, careful attention to detail matters desperately because curriculum and instructional materials not only document the culture, but they enhance it, sustain it, and they can change it too. They can also save and change lives.

Thank you for your time and service,

Cynthia Cortez

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